

IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION HEALTH

Health conditions in Iraq deteriorated substantially under Saddam Hussein. By 2003, almost a third of the children in southern and central Iraq suffered from malnutrition. Low breastfeeding rates and birth weights, high rates of anemia among women, diarrhea, and acute respiratory infections all contributed to a high child mortality rate. Life expectancy is 58 years—low in comparison to the average for least developed countries of 65 years. Rivers used for drinking water were filled with raw sewage and streets were garbage-strewn and rodent-infested.

USAID awarded a \$43.8-million contract to Abt Associates and grants to UNICEF and the World Health Organization to assist in revitalizing the healthcare system. These partners facilitate the restoration of health services to the Iraqi population and strengthen the overall system. USAID's partners assist the Ministry of Health with policy, regulatory, planning, and budgetary processes; rehabilitation of health clinics, hospitals, and laboratories; provision of maternal and child healthcare; and improvement of basic healthcare standards.

Accomplishments

- Over 30 million doses of vaccines have been procured by the Ministry of Health (MOH) since July, supported by USAID and UNICEF.
- An estimated 3 million Iraqi children under the age of 5 have been vaccinated. The full amount of vaccines supported by USAID will benefit 4.2 million children under the age of five and 700,000 pregnant women.
- The first batch of 37 boxes of medical supply kits have been delivered to the Department of Health in Basrah. The kits supply basic medical supplies for a primary health clinic.
- More than 100,000 pregnant, nursing mothers and malnourished children under 5 years have received 2.5 kg of high protein biscuit supplementary food rations.
- Evaluated 18 national and regional public health laboratories for equipment needs and completed the rehabilitation of the National Polio Laboratory.
- Began the training of more than 8000 health workers to support screening and management of acutely malnourished children.
- Working with the CPA and Iraqi MOH to develop a Health Sector Master Plan.

Next Steps

- Rehabilitate 21 referral hospitals, 50 public health centers, 20 delivery rooms, and 35 hospitals in Baghdad by April 2004.
- Continue to conduct monthly national immunization days.
- In preparation for the school health campaign, due on November, UNICEF has ordered school health kits to be used in the school health campaign, benefiting over 3 million primary school students.
- 68 clinics will be refurbished by the end of November. Of these, 30 clinics are in Baghdad, 30 clinics are in Basrah, and 8 clinics are in the North Region.

Issues

- Staff and patients are reluctant to visit hospitals for services due to safety concerns.